# BRIEF NOTES.

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(*Read March 1, 1918.*)

## Soul.

In the infancy of the human race, grown men, of course, had the ideas of little children. As the eye and the sensory nerves perceive the bodily actions and experiences, nearly the same as if those of another body, so the invisible actions and experiences of the brain are observed by the pineal gland or some other parts of the brain, seemingly by a separate organ, or almost with the appearance of the observer's being a distinct individual. The child-like early men evidently so reckoned it, and, while making the observation by their own brain, without conscious effort, considered the observer to be separate from their body. This retired, refined observer of the actions of their body and, to some extent, of their brain, they called their soul, and imputed to it a separate existence, and, in some tribes, a life beyond the life of the body, as suggested by apparitions and dreams. As the idea was fundamentally child-like, it was readily absorbed by children, and with increasing years was tenaciously retained. It did not seem inconsistent with the action of the invisible wind and perhaps other actions of an invisible source. The ancient Latin word for soul is even plainly derived from the word for breath, showing that the soul was, in action, or originally, like air, or the wind. In the course of time, the tenaciously held idea of the soul has become more refined; and, while the soul is still evidently taken to be a material substance, it is quite etherially, tenuously refined, and is often spoken of as altogether immaterial. Nevertheless, it always has, when sifted, undeniably several of the characteristics of concrete matter.

As late as medieval times, each human body was conceived to have not only one, but at least three, souls. As the Right Reverend Avitus, in the sixth century, elucidated:

"Of Man, flesh, spook, mind, spirit, in all twice twain,
To places four these double pairs attain:
To earth the flesh; the spook near by will fly;
The mind to Netherworld, the spirit soars high."

Or in the original:

"Bis duo sunt Homini, manes, caro, spiritus, umbra;
Quatuor ista loci bis duo suscipiunt:
Terra tegit carnem, tumulum circumvolat umbra,
Orcus habet manes, spiritus alta petit."

According to Hindoo belief, each body has seven souls. Of course, one of the souls would be suggested by the lifelike apparition of deceased relatives or friends, seen either while the observer was awake or in dreams. The absurdity of the inference from the occurrence is evident from the fact that the apparitions reproduce even the inanimate clothing, as well as the admittedly mortal material body.

The idea of a soul has lent itself very readily to the promotion of morals, so dear and so natural to the human race. The soul in its life after the death of the body has been supposed to be in happy or unhappy condition, according to behavior during the life of the body; or according to the behavior of descendants left alive; supplying an incentive to good behavior during one's own life, or after the death of loved relatives. The systems of morals built upon the idea of a soul are highly refined, with marvellously ingenious and carefully consistent complications; and are considered to be a strong argument in favor of that idea. But, as all false errors are pernicious, and entail further harmful errors; so, we may be sure, the eradication of this falsity would be a benefit to morality. The strongest incentives to morality and the surest guides to it are to be found in the relations of the natural body, without regard to any imaginary soul; and morality based upon the existence of souls is uncertain and groping, notwithstanding its good intention.

### The Word of God.

The Christian, Buddhist and other peoples so deeply revere their sacred scriptures, that they downright consider them to be literally the word of God, an omniscient God. But that idea is hardly borne

out by the internal evidence. An omniscient god would speak with yet greater wisdom than the wisest man. A wise lawyer exerts his utmost skill to express his meaning clearly and simply, beyond the possibility of misunderstanding, or of twisting, avoiding hyperbole, or any kind of exaggeration, or possible obscurity. We do not find such language in the gospels; and, indeed, it would be altogether foreign to their Asiatic authorship. We find there quite seriously the monstrous hyperboles of swallowing a camel, of having a wooden beam in the eye, of a camel's going through the eye of a needle, of heaping coals of fire on the head; all well enough as jokes, like the description of the Green Mountain road so steep that "greased lightning could not go down it without the breeching on." But the free use in earnest of such expressions suggests a like absence of literal meaning for other words, such as the removal of a mountain by sufficient faith. The trouble comes when it is to be decided where such free interpretation shall be applied. Is it meant to be taken literally that we should swear not at all; that, when we are struck on one cheek, we should turn the other cheek; that we should out and out love our enemies; that we should exactly do to others what we wish them to do to us? The general secular decision in Christendom on such points has been that the injunctions were not to be taken altogether literally. Yet many simple, honest, straightforward individuals have been inclined to insist that the expressions should be taken literally; for the word of God could have been uttered only in a strictly literal sense, not to be in any way perverted or twisted.

### Classical Education.

Much has justly been said of the beneficial effect of the cultivation of literary taste and of the enrichment of the mind from acquaintance with classical books, masterpieces that have outlasted many centuries; and something has been said of the advantage of classical linguistic knowledge. But too little seems to have been said of the logical downright need of studying the classics as a help towards a thorough understanding of our own language, and towards easy and correct reasoning.

What most distinguishes a man from a brute? It is, of course, the reasoning power. And what gives the power to reason? Clearly, it is language, the means by which reasoning is done. The cultivation of the power of language, how to use it readily and accurately, is, then, of the highest importance. With our English language, derived in so large a part from the classical languages, it seems quite plain that a full understanding of it would be greatly aided by a good knowledge of them. Thereby, the true significance of words would be learned, their precise shades of meaning, their original meaning, and the meaning that has been historically acquired. Evidently, the most perfect knowledge of the meaning of words would be gained by a study of their use in their original classical languages. With a thorough knowledge of the meaning of words, they could readily be used correctly in reasoning. The danger of fallacies would in great measure be avoided. Some such knowledge could be learned from English etymological grouping, or dictionaries; but obviously much more satisfactorily by studying the classics and their languages.

## Of.

At the age of nine years, my budding philological inclination was bluntly rebuffed and checked by a reminder of my complete ignorance of the meaning and etymology of even so small a word as of. It has become clear that the word is closely allied to off, and that it signifies that one thing may be considered concretely or abstractly to be off from, or a part of, another thing. But a knowledge of the precise meaning of the word does not seem to be universal, and the word seems consequently to be inaccurately used. One source of error is the impression that the word is the precise equivalent of the French *de*; so that a supposedly literal translation would sometimes introduce a Gallicism into our English. But the French *de* is derived from the Latin *de,* and means concerning, quite a different meaning from our word of. The meaning of *de* is much more correctly indicated by our adjectival relation of two substantives. The French *école de danse* becomes dancing school; *école des mines* becomes mining school, or mine school, a school in regard to mines, not of mines, concretely or abstractly off from

mines. The instinct in the matter is much stronger and more correct in England than in America. The English quite naturally say correctly, Public Works Department, while in America, we sometimes, as a result of dangerous little knowledge, meet with Department of Public Works, that is, intended as a literal translation from the French, which would be literally department concerning public works. The adjectival relation gives practically the same meaning, showing that the department is the one concerned with public works, not of them (which would be one of them, not including them all). The difference is: a department that has to with all the public works; and a department among (or off from) public works.